

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
Oct. 7, 1935

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed Sept. 30, 1935

A SEMI-DEFUNCT SUPERSTITION

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology

A few decades ago European agriculturists and horticulturists were wasting a vast amount of money in firing cannons, bombs and rockets at the clouds for the purpose of averting hailstorms. The vigorous campaign of education conducted by meteorologists with respect to this delusive practice seems to have borne fruit, for much less is heard nowadays than formerly about "hail-shooting," as the process is often called. It seems, however, that the new skepticism of the public concerning the merits of hail-shooting does not necessarily imply abandonment of the equally foolish idea that the firing of explosives may affect the weather in other ways.

A few years ago some unregenerate hail-shooter in the village of Pollestres, near the city of Perpignan, in southern France, was accused by his neighbors of causing a drought in that vicinity by firing rockets at the clouds. The village authorities accordingly addressed a memorial to the prefect of the department, requesting that the practice be stopped. The preamble runs as follows:

"Whereas, according to our learned meteorologists, the firing of rockets is without effect on hailstorms,

"Whereas said rockets can attain a height of only 1,000 to 1,200 meters, while the frozen clouds are at 3,000 to 4,000 meters,

"And whereas, in consequence of such firing, the water clouds are quickly dissipated and therefore cannot give their maximum of rain," etc.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE
2101 Constitution Ave.
Washington, D.C.